

Feminization of Poverty: A Review of Literature

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“Feminization of poverty” is the concept that has been most commonly used to express the relationship between gender and poverty in the development literature. It is a relative concept based on the comparison of women with men. While the term feminization of poverty is widely used, it can mean many things and it is not immediately clear whether the concept refers to all women relative to men, or of working women relative to working men. Most often, the concept, feminization of poverty is used to refer to the increasing probability that a woman- headed household is more likely to be poor than a household headed by a man. This review posed a question, which is; are women more likely to be poorer than men? and if so, why women are more likely to be poorer. Based on the theoretical and empirical literature, this review has its own objective, which is to identify the factors which are associated with poverty among women as general and particular for working women and women- headed household.

Gender inequality and gender discrimination in many aspects make women more vulnerable than men. Women experience more physical and mental ill health, less education and knowledge, greater incidence of violence and less political power. The traditional concept is women have “double burden”; be an income earner and responsible to maintain the family. Moreover they are “Time poor”. By and large, women remain responsible for a great deal of the care for children, the sick and elderly, and engage in domestic work; cooking, washing, cleaning, ironing, etc. Hence, they are able to spend fewer hours on work in paid labour market. Lower salaried occupations due to lack of skills, work place discrimination, culture, religion and social norms decreases female labour force participation and makes working women economically and socially more insecure and vulnerable. Women heading their households carry a “triple burden”; employment, housework and child care at a greater economic disadvantage. The literature also suggests that policies should aim to focus on gender equity to reduce feminization of poverty.

Key words: *Equity, Feminization, Gender, Poverty, Women-Headed Household.*